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# Sleeping-Pill Overdose Fells Wife of U-2 Pilot

(Special to Newsday)

Washington—The attractive 27-year-old wife of U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers was reported "much improved" in a Washington hospital today, although she was still unable to talk after an almost lethal overdose of sleeping pills had kept her unconscious for more than 16 hours.

Her husband was not available for comment yesterday. This left unanswered the big question — why Mrs. Barbara Powers swallowed the 28 sleeping pills that sent her to the hospital.

Mrs. Powers' bout with death came 23 months after her husband, an employee of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), was reported missing over Russia, and just more than two months after he was released from a Russian prison. She had greeted the news of his release with tears of joy, saying: "It's so wonderful."

The brunet Mrs. Powers, who has been living with her husband in an Alexandria apartment, was rushed unconscious to Alexandria Hospital at 3:15 AM yesterday. She was reported in "critical condition" and transferred to Georgetown Hospital in Washington, where her stomach was pumped. A gaunt, drawn Powers accompanied his wife and remained at her side most of the morning.

She remained unconscious until 7:30 last night, when doctors reported that "she hears you but she's not able to respond." She was described as semi-

conscious and "responding satisfactorily." Powers was at her side when she regained consciousness.

The exact medical nature of Mrs. Power's condition varied according to whom reporters asked. "Acute gastrointestinal upset, cause undetermined," was the verdict of her attending physician, Dr. George Shriner. Her husband told a fellow CIA employe in the afternoon that his wife was suffering from "acute indigestion." And Alexandria Hospital officials said she had been treated for "medication reaction." It remained for police to say exactly what Mrs. Powers was reacting against. Washington Police Lt. Nelson Rickey said Mrs. Powers had taken an overdose of 28 sleeping pills. He didn't say why.

By all accounts Mrs. Powers had gone through a lot since her 32-year-old high flying husband bailed out over Russia in May, 1960. She attended his much-publicized trial in Moscow and was later present in the courtroom when he was convicted of spying and sentenced to 10 years in prison. She returned to Milledgeville, Ga. where she lived with her mother, and waited for a telephone call that might tell her her husband had been released. The call finally came 18 months later, when Powers was freed in February in a deal involving the simultaneous release of Col. Rudolf Abel, a Soviet spy serving a 30-year sentence in this country.

"It's so wonderful and unexpected, that I have been crying for joy—I really have," an excited Mrs. Powers told reporters after word of her husband's release came through. When Powers returned to the country Feb. 11, he and his brunet wife lived in a secret hideaway while the CIA went over the entire incident. The agency later cleared Powers of any wrongdoing, and he and his wife moved into a modest apartment in Alexandria, outside Washington. Powers retained his \$30,000-a-year CIA job, though not as a pilot.



Mrs. Barbara Powers